Fostering Intrinsic Motivation through Intergroup Relationships

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I discuss a set of activities that work together to help form and maintain a positive group dynamic while raising awareness of individual learner motivation. With English Discussion Center (EDC) class lessons being group-oriented, and the learners' success being partly dependant on how these groups perform together, I will discuss existing beliefs regarding the importance of creating strong groups and improving cohesiveness. As links have been made between group dynamics and learner motivation, I will also introduce influencing theories that support the principles behind the classroom activities. A clear description of each stage of the activity is given, with added variations that are dependent on the level of the group. I will conclude by reflecting on the positive and negative effects that were a result of the activity.

INTRODUCTION

In the EDC, it is not uncommon for teachers to discuss the differences between individual classes and learners. Our observations tell us that even though we may teach each class the same way, the success of the students varies. Psychologists have implied that differences in learner outcomes must be due to individual differences (Mitchell, Myles, & Marsden, 2013) or what Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) identify as learner variables. These include affective variables, such as attitude, motivation, language anxiety, and personality.

Students who are taking EDC classes are first-year students who come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Therefore, the EDC classes are a new experience for them where they must work collaboratively with people they have never met before, each with different personalities, motivations, and attitudes towards studying English. In addition, their previous learning experiences may have been very different. While secondary school education provides language classes that are communicative in their approach to language teaching (MEXT, 2018), my experience of working in such schools has taught me that the methods used for communicative language teaching (CLT) vary from school to school. In addition, more emphasis is put on the teaching of grammar and vocabulary through traditional, teacher-fronted methods. Taguchi (2005) found that this was due to high school teachers' concern about entrance examinations. This could imply that some students may not be comfortable in a discussion-based environment. Also, Kimura, Nakata and Okumura's research into the motivations of Japanese EFL learners concluded that "Japanese EFL learners have inhibitory factors operating against learning English such as anxiety, past negative experiences, or preferring teacher-dominated lectures" (2001, p.64). They suggested that teachers should pay attention to their students in terms of human relations between both learners and facilitators. This was reinforced in Yashima, Nishide-Zenuk and Shimizu's (2004) research, which also highlighted the necessity of looking into "how learners' interactions with their environment, including teachers, co-learners and hosts, make the learners more or less willing to communicate" (p. 144).

EDC lessons follow a unified curriculum. Each lesson follows a similar structure, with every student being taught the same functional language items (Hurling, 2012). The students complete the same discussion-based activities, which are related to the same topic. Even if it were possible for the teacher to identify different learner differences, the nature of the course makes it difficult for the teacher to attend to each student's specific needs. This means that is the responsibility of the students to be aware of their peers' needs, goals, and motivations. This

requires them to form intermember relationships, which is a continuous process throughout the learning process (Shaw, 1981). As Dörnyei (2009) explains, "the most crucial and general factor fostering intermember relationships is learning about each other as much as possible, which involves sharing genuine personal information." With the time constraints of a regular EDC lesson, the students are not given the opportunity to learn things about each other, other than what is discussed in their topic-based discussions. However, during the 14-week semester, there are four review units, where new language items (i.e. Discussion Skills) are not presented. The activities that I have created can be used during these review units to help develop intermember relationships.

DISCUSSION

What is Motivation?

Gardner (1985) describes motivation as "the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning a language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language" (p. 10). He continues by defining L2 motivation as "the extent to which an individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity" (p. 10). Therefore, the three components that Gardner described are: mental exertion, a desire to succeed, and a positive attitude to learn the language. Similar components can be drawn from Dörnyei's (2001) explanation of motivation, as he states that "motivation explains why people decide to do something, how hard they are going to pursue it and how long they are willing to sustain the activity" (p.7). So, what factors motivate first-year university students who attend the EDC classes? To answer that question, it is important to look closer at existing theories of motivation.

When referring to motivation in L2 learning, emphasis is often put on integrative and instrumental reasons for studying modern languages. This division was first introduced by Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert (1985), and became crucial factors in Gardner's Socio-Educational Model. Integrative motivation means integrating oneself within a culture by identifying with its people. The idea is that if the learner becomes invested in that culture, they will be more successful in a language classroom (Cook, 2016). On the other hand, instrumental motivation means learning a language for a specific purpose such as passing an exam or getting a job promotion. The type of motivation depends entirely on the individual learner. Some people learn while integratively motivated because they plan to live overseas, whereas many learners learn with an instrumental motivation because they want a better career, and some people learn with both (Cook, 2016).

A popular theory of general motivation is the Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Deci and Ryan (1985) believe that motivation can be separated into two types: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation comes from within. It is defined as "the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence" (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 56). This means that there is no reward except the activity itself. Deci and Ryan continue by explaining that "when intrinsically motivated a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external prods, pressures, or rewards" (p. 56). This would suggest that the activity itself would either have to be interesting or provide satisfaction to the person through engagement with the task. Deci and Ryan make connections to this idea and Skinner's (1953) operant theory, which proposes that "all behaviors are motivated by rewards" (Skinner, 1953, as cited by Deci and Skinner, 2000, p.57). While intrinsic motivation is clearly an important type of motivation; most of the activities that we do are not intrinsically motivated, for example, "especially the case after early childhood, as the freedom to be intrinsically motivated becomes increasingly curtailed by social demands and roles that require individuals to assume responsibility for non-intrinsically interesting tasks" (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 60). This is what Deci and Ryan (1985) describe as extrinsic motivation. This is a drive to behave based on external sources with the anticipation of reward or instrumental value. An example of extrinsic motivation

for university students could include studying hard to get a good grade point average, resulting in getting a good job in the future.

A more up-to-date explanation of motivation is provided by Dörnyei's Motivational Self System. Dörnyei (2009) uses three constructs: "Ideal L2 Self", "Ought-to L2 Self", and "L2 Learning Experience". Ideal L2 Self refers to the kind of person a learner hopes to become. Therefore, if the learner would like to become someone who speaks an L2, this is a powerful motivator (Dörnyei & Ushoda, 2009). Relations can easily be made to Gardner's idea of integrative motivation, which Dörnyei (2005) equates to the Ideal L2 Self. Ought-to L2 Self refers to the person a learner believes they ought to be, to avoid negative outcomes. This may be due to external sources, as with instrumental motivation.

What Motivates EDC Students?

Signs of the different types of motivation can be observed in EDC students. For example, the students who study Global Business tend to participate more actively and have higher test scores in comparison to students who study subjects such as Law or Economics. The students who appear more motivated tend to show signs of integrated motivation. Many of them have lived or studied overseas, while the students who have not often show an interest in foreign cultures via foreign media such as movies, TV shows, music, news, and events. One of the textbook discussions is "Where is the best place to live in the world?", and while most students respond with "Japan", the students who appear more intrinsically motivated choose countries related to their L2. By referring to Dörnyei's Motivation Self System, this implies that these students have formed an Ideal L2 Self, as they see themselves using the L2 overseas or in their daily lives in the future.

This does not mean that the students who are less intrinsically motivated always struggle to succeed. From listening to students' discussions, it is clear that some students have no intention of integrating within another culture or using English in daily activities. Although they may participate less actively, many of these students still succeed in passing the course. This could imply that their motivation is extrinsic or instrumental, meaning they wish to get good grade or have a fear of failing.

Intermember Relationships

Dörnyei (2009) highlights the importance of relationship building in a classroom environment. With EDC classes student-led and student-centered, it is necessary for the students to form and maintain relationships within their group. Dörnyei explains that the most important characteristic of a good group is the "emergence of a general level of acceptance" (p. 18). Bringing students together involves important factors, such as learning about each other, proximity, cooperation, a rewarding nature of group experience and intergroup competition, as seen in Table 1. These conditions are also echoed by Hadfield (1998), who suggests improving classroom dynamics by *forming the group*, *maintaining the group*, and *ending with a positive experience*.

By strengthening relationships within the group, the group becomes more cohesive, which leads to better productivity and performance (Ehrman & Dörnyei, 1998). The idea that learners perform better as a group is reaffirmed by Brown (2000), who explains that "when what we are doing and who we are doing it with matter enough to us, we will work harder for our groups than we will ever do on our own" (p.192). To achieve group cohesiveness, at least three components are required (Mullen & Copper, 1994): *interpersonal attraction* (i.e. desire to belong to the group because of liking the other members, *commitment to task* (i.e. desire to belong to the group because of interest in the task, and *group pride* (i.e. desire to belong to the group because of the prestige of its membership).

Table 1. Factors enhancing intermember attractions and acceptance (Dörnyei and Malterez, 1999; Ehrman and Dörnyei, 1998; Hadfield, 1992; Johnson and Johnson, 1995 as cited in Dörnyei & Murphey, 2009).

Initial attractions:	Acceptance (later):
● Physical attractiveness ● Perceived ability and competence ● Attitude and personality similarities ● Shared hobbies ● Living near to one another ● Similar living conditions and family status ● Comparable economic status	● Learning about each other ● Proximity (physical distance) ● Contact ● Interaction ● Cooperation ● The rewarding nature of group experience and the successful completion of whole-group tasks ● Extracurricular activities ● Joint hardship ● Common threat ● Intergroup competition ● The teacher's role modelling

By forming and maintaining a strong group dynamic through intermember relationships and cohesiveness, learner motivation can be strengthened. Intrinsic motivation is increased as the students form an internal desire to be part of the group and support its members, while extrinsically they wish to succeed to avoid letting the group down. Hadfield (1998) states that "forming a group is relatively easy: the initial stage of group life is usually harmonious as students get to know each other and begin to work together. Maintaining a cohesive group over a term or a year is far more difficult" (p. 45), and this is evident amongst EDC students, who are in their first year of university. Although they may be motivated to form relationships and build friendships at the start of the year, as the year progresses, they also form relationships with other students outside of the EDC classroom. This can result in reduced interest in their group members.

Ending the Group Experience

Both Dörnyei (2009) and Hadfield (1998) discuss the importance of ending a course with a positive group experience. As EDC students must complete the course over two semesters (i.e. Spring & Fall), finishing the first semester with a positive experience could provide heightened motivation for their return in the second semester. Also, the students have formed relationships over a few months, and the course has been a part of their weekly routine. Hadfield (1998) explains, "it is important to give students some sense of continuity after the abrupt end of a course that may have been a major part of their lives for some three months" (p.163); therefore, the final lesson should provide the students with appropriate closure. This can be achieved through what Dörnyei (2009) calls an "intergroup competition (e.g. games in which groups compete within a class)" (p.25), as games emphasise the importance of cooperation, build friendships, and increase motivation. Deci and Ryan (2000) stated that an intrinsically motivated person is "moved to act for the fun or challenge", which I believe a game can provide. My belief is supported by Pink (2011), as he explains a reward-based gamification can be valuable in helping someone engage with the task, especially if there is a situation where the learner has no way of developing intrinsic motivation to perform the task.

Spiro (2013) discusses features which might be relevant to teachers to apply to their lessons to motivate students:

- *Competition* – a race provides incentive, allowing the students to represent a team to achieve a collective best. Competitions offer instant "measures" of success which can be motivating if the goal is within one's grasp. An activity can be turned into a game by introducing a "race" element.
- *Constraint* –games often have a constraint built in, such as a limited amount of time, or number of guesses, or a word or phrase disallowed.
- *Incentive* – many games have a specific goal such as a prize or reward.
- *Team spirit* – a games is one of the best ways to create a sense of team cohesion and responsibility. In a team competition, each member of the group has a role and significance, and their successes become visible.

At the start of all EDC class lessons, the students take part in a fluency-based activity called "3/2/1". This idea was adapted from an existing activity named "The 4/3/2 Fluency Activity" created by Maurice (1983). In this activity, students must answer questions under reducing time constraints. In each stage, the students repeat the same questions with an aim to be able to repeat information more quickly and concisely. Nation (1989) explains the activity's key tenets as being: meaning-focused, easy (i.e. using familiar material), the pressure to go faster (i.e. a time constraint), and quantity of practice (i.e. volume). Nation also suggests that a fluency-based activity should contain a competitive element, if possible. By looking at the key features of Maurice's activity, and the activity carried out in every class, relations can be made to the relevant principles that form a game, with exception to there not being a competitive element in Maurice's activity. Therefore, I felt it best to adapt the existing "3/2/1" to make a competitive activity, using all of the features suggested by both Nation and Spiro.

After teaching the first few textbook lessons of the semester, I chose two classes that I felt showed similar levels of motivation. Both of these classes were intermediate level (i.e. EDC Level III, TOEIC score 280-479), with a less friendly group dynamic. I completed each stage of my activity with one of the classes while teaching regular review classes to the other group.

PROCEDURE

A group of activities was created to work together during the length of the 14-week course. The activities support Hadfield's (1998) approach of forming a group, maintaining a group, and ending the group experience. In the initial stages, the groups are formed by learning about each other's perceived ability, and shared interests and information. The group was then strengthened by allowing the students to learn about their group members. Finally, an intergroup game was played to conclude the group experience. Each step was conducted during each of the four review lessons (i.e. Lessons 4, 8, 12 and 14), replacing the presentation stage of the lesson.

Forming the Group

Stage 1 (Lesson 4)

Each student is given an activity sheet (Appendix A). Individually, they complete the first question by ticking three activities that they think are similar to learning a language. As this requires a degree of critical thinking, the teacher can provide an example. For example, some people find learning a language like learning to ride a bicycle because it takes time and lots of practice. After checking three boxes, the students share and discuss their ideas with a partner.

Next, each student answers questions 2 and 3. They are asked to consider their partner's answers depending on what they learned from question 1. This will help the students consider how their partners feel about learning English, with a focus on both positive and negative emotions.

The final question asks the students to discuss their choices, and to see if they made correct or incorrect assumptions. It's not necessary for the students to have chosen correctly. The main goal is to make the students think about their peers, while also sharing information about their own feelings. This is also a good opportunity for the teacher to learn whether the students are internally motivated or motivated by external sources.

Maintaining the Group

Stage 2 (Lesson 8)

To bring the students together, it is necessary for them to learn what they have in common, such as having shared hobbies (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2009). This is the focus of the next activity. In pairs (preferably different pairs than the first activity), the student complete the "We both..." worksheet (Appendix B). The students must ask each other questions to find out what they have in common. After completing the worksheet, they spend a few minutes sharing their answers with another pair, again, looking for similarities.

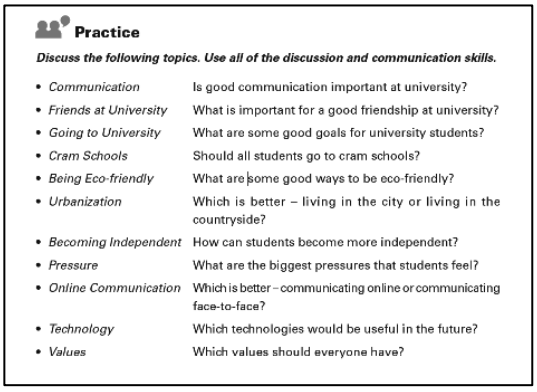
Stage 3 - (Lesson 12)

The next step focuses on what Dörnyei (2009) refers to as "acceptance" (p. 19). To maintain the group, the students share what they have learned about their classmates. Working in pairs, each student completes an "I Am You" worksheet (Appendix C). They complete each sentence as if they were their partner. It is important for the teacher to explain that, if they do not know the answer, then they can guess. It is not a test of their knowledge of one another. After completing the worksheet, the students share and discuss the answers. By doing so, they can show interest in each other, learn new information, and have fun sharing humorous ideas.

Ending with a Positive Experience

Stage 4 (Lesson 14)

The final EDC lesson follows a different format than other lessons, as the students have already discussed all of the discussion topics and learned the language items (i.e. Discussion Skills and Communication Skills). For this activity, principles from the "3-2-1 Fluency" are used alongside the "Practice" questions seen in Figure 1.



Practice

Discuss the following topics. Use all of the discussion and communication skills.

• *Communication*	Is good communication important at university?
• *Friends at University*	What is important for a good friendship at university?
• *Going to University*	What are some good goals for university students?
• *Cram Schools*	Should all students go to cram schools?
• *Being Eco-friendly*	What are some good ways to be eco-friendly?
• *Urbanization*	Which is better – living in the city or living in the countryside?
• *Becoming Independent*	How can students become more independent?
• *Pressure*	What are the biggest pressures that students feel?
• *Online Communication*	Which is better – communicating online or communicating face-to-face?
• *Technology*	Which technologies would be useful in the future?
• *Values*	Which values should everyone have?

Figure 1. What Do You Think? (EDC textbook) – Spring Semester, Lesson 14, Practice.

Two discussion groups are formed. In the center of each table, a "Boom Boom Balloon" tabletop game is placed containing an inflated balloon, with a 3-numbered dice (Appendix D). A student from each table is given a "Speaking Stick" (i.e. a plastic needle belonging to the tabletop

game). The student begins a discussion by choosing one of the questions from the Practice section (Table 2). The teacher sets the timer for a desired amount of time (e.g. 3 minutes) and presses start. The time is kept hidden from the students. The only way for the students with the stick to pass it to another group member is for them to ask a Discussion or Communication Skills question (i.e. Listener skills). The students must only discuss the chosen topic, and they continue passing the stick until the time runs out. When the timer beeps, the students with the "Speaking Sticks" must roll the dice, and then put the plastic needles into the "Boom Boom Balloon" depending on the number shown on the dice. A new plastic needle is given to each group and the process starts again with a new topic. The goal of the game is for the groups to compete, while also working together to decide the best place to insert the needles. The losing team is the group that pops the balloon first. The length of the game can be controlled by the teacher by increasing or decreasing the amount of discussion time using the timer.

VARIATIONS

Each stage can be adapted to suit different proficiency levels. I mainly focused on higher level classes when testing the activities. For Level III or IV students (i.e. TOEIC score below 280), translations could be considered for difficult vocabulary. For example, Stage 1's worksheet has vocabulary that some students might not understand. Therefore, these words could be translated or omitted. For higher-level students, in Stage 3, an "If I were you…" worksheet could be used, where students answer hypothetical questions as if they were their partner.

In the final stage, I purchased two of the same table-top game to conduct the activity. I felt that the idea of popping the balloon strengthened the competition, added to the constraint, and added a new incentive the speaking activity. However, it may be difficult for teachers to purchase the same game. One alternative would be to use other games with similar goals. For example, Jenga is already popular with students and follows similar rules. When using Jenga, the students could pass around a pen. When the timer rings, the students must remove a piece from the Jenga tower. Whichever group's tower falls first loses.

CONCLUSION

After completing each stage of the activity, I felt that the activity group became closer over the 14-week course. At each stage, many similarities between the students were discovered, and the students appeared to enjoy learning about each other. Very little changed with the other group's dynamic, whereas the activity group seemed more positive towards taking part in the discussions. In addition, during the Discussion Tests, they seemed more comfortable working with different group members. This supports the views of Hook and Vass (2000), as they said, "By establishing rapport, you are making an essential connection with someone at an emotional level. You are willing to share part of you and they are prepared to invest themselves into the dynamic" (p. 20).

From a teacher's perspective, I felt that I learned much more about the students who completed the activities. The first stage made it clear that many of the students did not plan to use English in their future careers. Also, most of them used negative words to describe their language learning experiences. This would imply that these students were extrinsically motivated and lacked the "L2 Ideal Self" that Dörnyei (2009) describes.

I used the final stage of the activity in all of the remaining classes. In all cases, the students showed excitement and appeared to be more inherently satisfied with playing a game. This supports Pink's (2011) belief that games can improve intrinsic motivation through increased engagement with the task. In one of the classes, I used an EDC Discussion Test during the game, to score the students' performance. I tested both groups, and every student was able to get a perfect score in less than half the time of a regular Discussion Test.

Overall, I believe that it is the teacher's responsibility to support the creation of a positive group dynamic. By providing opportunities for the student to form relationships, groups can become more motivated and willing to communicate.

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APPENDIX A – Student Worksheet (Lesson 4)

WHAT KIND OF LEARNER ARE YOU?

1. Tick the *three* activities you think are most similar to learning a language, and share your answers with a partner. Do you think learning a language is like:

Learning to ride a bike ☐	Learning to walk ☐	Learning to swim ☐
Learning to play the piano ☐	Learning words for a play ☐	Learning dates for a history test ☐
Learning to play chess ☐	Learning a math equation ☐	Learning how to play Tetris ☐

2. How would *<u>your partner</u>* describe learning a language? Learning a language:

is hard work ☐	is painful ☐	is easy ☐
is interesting ☐	is confusing ☐	comes naturally ☐
is difficult ☐	is boring ☐	needs a good memory ☐
is frustrating ☐	is a lot of fun ☐	needs lots of time ☐

3. How do you think <u>your partner</u> feels when speaking a foreign language?

Shy ☐	Confident ☐	Embarrassed ☐
Frustrating ☐	Challenged ☐	Nervous ☐
Stupid ☐	Happy ☐	Relaxed ☐

4. Show your answers to questions 2 and 3 to your partner and discuss the results.

APPENDIX B – Student Worksheet (Lesson 8)

WE BOTH…

We are both…
We both have…
We both like…
When we were younger, we both used to…
In the future, both of us will probably…

APPENDIX C – Student Worksheet (Lesson 12)

I AM YOU

Imagine you are your partner and complete the sentences.

I like the colour _____ because _____.
My favourite time of day is _____.
When I was at school I used to
_____.
I enjoy _____.
I really dislike _____.
The kind of music I like best is _____.
I sometimes worry about _____.
My life goal is to
_____.
I like people who _____.
People like me because
_____.

APPENDIX D – Discussion Game Layout (Lesson 14)